

Message Text

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PAGE 01 FRANKF 06263 01 OF 02 091336Z
ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2861
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
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AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 FRANKFURT 6263

MILITARY COMMANDS FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, GW
SUBJ: THE HESSIAN ELECTIONS-TWO MONTHS BEFORE

SUMMARY/INTRODUCTIONS

1. TWO MONTHS BEFORE THE UNUSUALLY SIGNIFICANT STATE ELECTION
IN HESSE ON OCTOBER 8 THE OUTCOME REMAINS HIGHLY UNCERTAIN.

SEVERAL POLLS HAVE BEEN ATTEMPTED BUT THE PROCEDURES AS
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PAGE 02 FRANKF 06263 01 OF 02 091336Z

WELL AS RESULTS ARE SUSPECT AND IN ANY EVENT WHATEVER
THE MERITS OF POLLS THEY ARE PREMATURE IN WHAT IS AN
UNUSUALLY FLUID SITUATION. THE KEY QUESTIONS OF COURSE
ARE FIRST WHETHER THE FDP WILL SURVIVE AND, IF IT DOES
NOT, WHETHER THE CDU WILL RETAIN ITS PLURALITY OR
PERHAPS--THOUGH UNLIKELY--ACHIEVE AN ABSOLUTE
MAJORITY. IF THE FDP DOES NOT POLL 5 PERCENT AND THE

CDU REMAINS A PLURALITY, IT WILL TAKE OVER THE REINS OF GOVERNMENT IN HESSE. TO PROVIDE A STATISTICAL BACKGROUND AGAINST WHICH TO ESTIMATE POSSIBLE OUTCOMES, THE FOLLOWING ARE THE STATISTICS FOR THE 1974 LANDTAG, THE 1976 BUNDESTAG AND THE MARCH 1977 COMMUNAL ELECTIONS PRESENTED AS PERCENTAGES OF POPULAR VOTES CAST. (LEFT AND RIGHT WING EXTREMIST GROUPS WERE POLITICALLY INSIGNIFICANT AND ARE THEREFORE OMITTED).

	1974 LANDTAG	1976 BUNDESTAG	1977 COMMUNAL ELECTIONS
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CDU	47.3 PERCENT	44.8 PERCENT	47.9 PERCENT
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SPD	43.2 PERCENT	45.7 PERCENT	42.3 PERCENT
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FDP	7.4 PERCENT	8.5 PERCENT	5.4 PERCENT
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INDEPENDENT VOTERS
ASSOCIATIONS

DID NOT RUN	DID NOT RUN	7.2 PERCENT#
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RAN ONLY IN SMALL COMMUNITIES, NOT IN BIG CITIES
END SUMMARY/INTRODUCTION

2. THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS
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PAGE 03 FRANKF 06263 01 OF 02 091336Z

THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT TO A CONSIDERABLE EXTENT HOLGER BOERNER HAS SUCCEEDED IN RESTORING THE TARNISHED IMAGE OF THE SPD LED ADMINISTRATION IN HESSE. THERE IS ALSO NO DOUBT THAT BOERNER PERSONALLY IS RESPECTED (RATHER THAN ADMIRER) AND GENERALLY CONSIDERED TO BE A DECENT, HONEST, NON-DOCTRINAIRE ADMINISTRATOR WHO HAS THE WELL-BEING OF THE PEOPLE AT HEART. BOERNER HAS RECEIVED, AND WILL RECEIVE, CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT FROM CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT (THE SPD'S SINGLE BIGGEST ASSET IN THIS ELECTION) AND THE NATIONAL PARTY LEADERSHIP, WHICH HAS USED ALL POSSIBLE OCCASIONS TO GIVE HIM EXPOSURE AND BOLSTER HIS POSITION. HE IS ACCEPTABLE OVER THE WIDE SPECTRUM OF POLITICAL OPINION WITHIN THE HESSIAN SPD AND HAS SO FAR SUCCEEDED IN CONTROLLING THE PARTY'S VOLATILE LEFT WING, FROM WHOM NARY A SQUEAK HAS BEEN HEARD IN RECENT WEEKS AND MONTHS--A PICTURE OF INTERNAL UNITY WHICH COULD BE MARRED BY THE DEBATE ON TAX REFORM. IT IS THUS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT HE WILL MANAGE TO IMPROVE THE SPD'S SHOWING OVER THE 1974 LANDTAG AND 1977 COMMUNAL ELECTIONS. WHETHER ALL THIS WILL BE ENOUGH TO OVERCOME THE CDU'S RECENT ASCENDANCY AND THE UNDERLYING CONSERVA-

TIVE TREND REMAINS TO BE SEEN.

3. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS

THE CDU HAS DROPPED ITS EARLIER CONFIDENT ASSERTION THAT AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN HESSE IS CLEARLY WITHIN REACH. ASIDE FROM THE ABOVE MENTIONED POSITIVE FACTORS WORKING FOR THE SPD, THE HESSIAN CDU SUFFERS FROM THE NATIONAL PARTY'S INABILITY TO PRESENT A DISTINCT, CONFIDENT AND ATTRACTIVE ALTERNATIVE TO CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT. THE FILBINGER AFFAIR IN NEIGHBORING BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG HAS NOT HELPED THE CDU, BUT ON THE OTHER HAND HAS PROBABLY NOT HURT IT, PARTICULARLY SINCE DREGGER SOME WEEKS AGO DEEMED IT WISE TO QUIETLY DISASSOCIATE HIMSELF FROM HIS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 FRANKF 06263 01 OF 02 091336Z

NEIGHBOR TO THE SOUTH. NEVERTHELESS, DREGGER HAS THE PROBLEM ON OVERCOMING THE IMAGE OF AN ARROGANT RIGHT WINGER. ON THE OTHER HAND THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS HAVE WORKING FOR THEM A NUMBER OF FACTORS INCLUDING THE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY AND GRASS ROOTS PERFORMANCE OF A WELL LED LOCAL PARTY MACHINE., A LARGELY SUCCESSFUL STRESS ON ISSUES INVOLVING PUBLIC EDUCATION, A SUBJECT WHICH AROUSES STRONG EMOTIONS AMONG MUCH OF THE ELECTORATE, THE GROWING CONSERVATIVE TREND AMONG THE VOTERS, AN ABILITY TO CAPITALIZE ON THE CDU'S SUCCESSES OF MARCH 1977, AND EVEN A FEELING THAT IT IS SIMPLY TIME FOR A CHANGE.

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PAGE 01 FRANKF 06263 02 OF 02 091323Z
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 FRANKFURT 6263

4. THE FREE DEMOCRATS

APART FROM THE JUNE 4 DISASTERS ELSEWHERE IN THE COUNTRY THE FDP HAS LOCAL TROUBLES AS WELL. THESE INCLUDE THE PERSISTENT AND INEFFECTIVELY DENIED STORIES THAT HEINZ-HERBERT KARRY, HESSIAN DEPUTY MINISTER-PRESIDENT, ECONOMIC MINISTER AND FDP NATIONAL TREASURER WILL LEAVE POLITICS IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE ELECTION TO BECOME PRESIDENT OF THE CREDIT INSTITUTE FOR RECONSTRUCTION; THE OSTENTATIOUS WITHDRAWAL FROM THE FDP AFTER 22 YEARS OF MEMBERSHIP OF HANS-HEINZ BIELEFELD, THE WELL LIKED AND RESPECTED FORMER HESSIAN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 FRANKF 06263 02 OF 02 091323Z

MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR AND FINALLY INDICATIONS-WHICH MIGHT SURFACE-THAT EKKEHARD GRIES, MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR AND THE PARTY'S CURRENT CHAIRMAN, IS UNDER CONSIDERABLE PERSONAL STRESS. MOREOVER, THE FDP HAS A PROBLEM IN OVERCOMING THE IMAGE THAT IT IS SIMPLY A COLLECTION OF FLOUNDERING OFFICE SEEKERS. FINALLY, BOERNER HAS ANNOUNCED THAT THE SPD IS NOT REPEAT NOT ASKING ANY OF ITS VOTERS TO GIVE THEIR VOTES TO THE JUNIOR COALITION PARTNER IN THIS ELECTION. WHILE RUMORS OF THE FDP'S PARLIAMENTARY DEATH WOULD BE PREMATURE AT THE MOMENT IT IS QUESTIONABLE THAT IT WILL BE ABLE TO GARNER THE REQUIRED 5 PERCENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE ON OCTOBER 8.

5. THE GREEN LISTS AND INDEPENDENT VOTERS

AFTER WEEKS OF WRANGLING MARKED BY POLITICAL DILETTANTISM OF A VERY HIGH ORDER THE GREEN LIST ECOLOGISTS HAVE NOW GIVEN UP THE ATTEMPT TO PRESENT A SIMPLE, UNIFIED SLATE TO THE HESSIAN ELECTORATE ON OCTOBER 8. INSTEAD IT SEEMS THE VOTERS WILL HAVE THEIR CHOICE AMONG A) THE

GRUENE AKTION ZUKUNFT (GAZ) ESSENTIALLY A COLLECTION OF REASONABLY CONSERVATIVE NATURE LOVERS, B) THE GRUENE LISTE UMWELTSCHUTZ (GLU), GENERALLY A POLITICALLY CENTER-OF-THE-ROAD GROUP DEVOTED TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, AND C) THE GRUENE LISTE WAEHLERINITIATIVE FUER UMWELTSCHUTZ AND DEMOKRATIE (GLW) WHICH IS NOT ONLY A MOUTHFUL BUT ALSO A DOCTRINAIRE LEFT-WING GROUP WITH INTER ALIA HAS NOMINATED FORMER STUDENT LEADER COHN BENDIT OF 1968 PARIS "EVENTS" FAME AS ONE OF ITS CANDIDATES FOR THE STATE PARLIAMENT. ASSERTIONS TO THE CONTRARY NOTWITHSTANDING NO ONE OF THESE GROUPS STANDS A CHANCE OF SURMOUNTING THE 5 PERCENT HURDLE AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 FRANKF 06263 02 OF 02 091323Z

THIS FACT BY ITSELF WILL MAKE THEM UNATTRACTIVE TO MANY VOTERS. THE POSSIBLE INFLUENCE OF SPLINTER GROUPS ON THE OUT-COME OF THE ELECTION HAS BEEN FURTHER COMPLICATED BY THE ANNOUNCEMENT ON AUGUST 6 THAT THE FREIE WAEHLERGEMEINSCHAFT (FWG) OR INDEPENDENT VOTERS ASSOCIATION IN HESSE WOULD ALSO RUN ITS OWN SLATE OF CANDIDATES ON OCTOBER 8. THE INDEPENDENT VOTERS ASSOCIATIONS, HEADED BY SIEGFRIED SORGE, A FORMER SOCIAL DEMOCRAT, IS ESSENTIALLY A CENTER GROUP WHICH MAY APPEAL PARTICULARLY TO DISSATISFIED FDP VOTERS AND WHICH HAS ANNOUNCED ITS WILLINGNESS TO ENTER INTO A COALITION WITH THE CDU. WHILE THE INDEPENDENT VOTERS ASSOCIATION SUCCEEDED IN OBTAINING 7.2 PERCENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE IN SMALL COMMUNITIES ONLY IN THE MARCH 1977 COMMUNAL ELECTION, IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT IT WILL DO THAT WELL IN A STATE ELECTION AND, IN FACT, IT IS NOT YET CERTAIN THAT ITS ANNOUNCED INTENTION TO RUN ITS OWN SLATE WILL HOLD UNTIL OCTOBER 8.

IT IS DIFFICULT AT THIS POINT TO JUDGE WHICH OF THE THREE COURRENT PARLIAMENTARY PARTIES WILL BE DAMAGED OR BENEFITTED BY THE ASSORTMENT OF SPLINTER GROUPS WHO HAVE ANNOUNCED THEIR INTENTIONS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ELECTION. ON BALANCE IT SEEMS THAT THE FDP MIGHT BE HURT MOST (BUT LESS THAN IT WOULD BE IF THERE HAD BEEN A SINGLE, UNITED GREEN SLATE), BUT THAT SOME DAMAGE WILL ALSO BE DONE TO THE SPD WHILE THE CDU WILL SUFFER THE LEAST. LEHMANN

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